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GENERAL POPE'S

Virginia Campaign

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GENERAL POPE'S VIRGINIA CAMPAIGN

OF 1862.

READ BEFORE

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BY LEWIS ESTE MILLS.

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GENERAL POPPE'S VIRGINIA CAMPAIGN OF 1862.

The summer of 1862 was creeping away. The army which had slowly advanced from the Quaker guns of Manassas, through Yorktown, toward Richmond, had been bearing witness with its blood of its willingness, its ability, and its desire to destroy the army of the rebels and occupy their capital, and was now slowly diminishing by sickness, while its commander slept and the enemy gathered strength.

For a year had the Republic wearily waited for the promised success of the Army of the Potomac—wearily waited, and wondered why.

It was determined to unite all the forces north of the Peninsula under one command, in order, by threatening the enemy from the north, and thus diverting their attention, to enable McClellan to accomplish the object of his campaign.

In consequence of this determination, the Government sent for General John Pope, who had greatly distinguished himself by his operations in the West, and on the 26th of June assigned him to the command of the Army of Virginia, numbering in all about 40,000 men.

The objects of the campaign were to be: *First*, The protection of Washington; and, *Secondly*, The relief of the Army of the Potomac by operations upon the enemy's lines of communication in the direction of Gordonsville and Charlottesville.

Two days afterward McClellan commenced his retreat to the James River, thus placing the whole rebel army between his own and the small force of Pope, and, of course, rendering different plans necessary.

General Pope proceeded immediately to concentrate his forces, stationing Sigel (in command of Fremont's corps) at Sperryville; Banks, six or eight miles east of him, and McDowell at Waterloo Bridge, on the pike leading from Sperryville to Warrenton, General King's division of McDowell's corps being left, by orders from Washington, at Fredericksburg.

He wrote to General McClellan, at Harrison's Landing, asking his views and offering cordial co-operation. The former were not given nor the latter promised. It became apparent that the appointment of an officer superior to the leaders of both armies was advisable, and General Halleck was placed in general command.

Appreciating the absolute necessity that the leaders of the two armies should act in concert, and made to fear, by the reception of the advances before mentioned to McClellan, that danger might ensue from the continuance of both in command, General Pope asked to be relieved and returned to the West. His request was not granted, however.

In the meantime various expeditions were sent out to operate upon the enemy's lines. Orders had been also

issued that the residents upon the lines of the railroads should be responsible for the safety of the roads; that the troops should subsist upon the country in which their operations should be carried on, furnishing vouchers, payable to loyal owners at the conclusion of the war; and for the arrest and sending within the rebel lines of all who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the United States.

The necessity and propriety of these orders will be well understood by any one who has read of the difficulty of carrying on our operations in the midst of a disaffected population, and are attested by the bitterness of the retaliatory orders of the enemy thus deprived of the aid of its friends in our rear.

July 29. General Pope left Washington to take command in the field, and on the 7th of August all the infantry and artillery, except King's division of McDowell's corps, which was left at Fredericksburg by orders from Washington, were posted along the turnpike from Sperryville, numbering about 28,500 men, and the next day, on the receipt of rumors of the enemy's crossing the Rapidan, were concentrated at Culpepper.

August 9. Banks was sent forward to Cedar Mountain to hold the enemy in check; but, advancing beyond the strong position he at first took, he engaged Jackson's force, bringing on a severe battle, in which we lost about 1,800 men. Jackson withdrew before daylight of the 10th, and on the next night (11th) retreated across the Rapidan toward Gordonsville, leaving dead and wounded on his line of march.

In the meantime King's division came up. On the 14th Reno joined with the Ninth Corps (Burnside's), numbering

about 8,000 men, and the army was formed in line as follows:

RIGHT—Sigel, on Robertson's River, at the crossing of the road from Cedar Mountain to Orange Court-house.

CENTER—McDowell, covering both flanks of Cedar Mountain.

LEFT—Reno, near Raccoon Ford, covering road to Stevensburg and Culpepper.

On the 16th of August a letter of Lee, dated the preceding day at Gordonsville, to General J. E. B. Stuart, was captured, stating the position of the enemy and their design to overwhelm Pope before McClellan could come up. This caused Pope to withdraw behind the Rappahannock, and post his forces with his left at Kelly's Ford and his right about three miles above Rappahannock Station.

In the meantime, August 3d, General McClellan had been ordered to withdraw immediately from the Peninsula to Acquia Creek. Against this order he remonstrated, and begged for reinforcements to enable him to take Richmond, to which General Halleck responded, on the 5th of August, with a repetition of the order, and subsequently the movement began.

Pope had fought his first battle, and was now lying behind the Rappahannock, with the full rebel force advancing for the purpose of overwhelming him.

On the 20th, 21st and 22d of August the rebel army made various unsuccessful attempts to cross the river, and then determined to turn his right flank. He was disabled from moving so as to oppose them in front by his orders to hold on to his communication with Fredericksburg.

August 20. Halleck telegraphs Pope: "Every effort

must be made to hold the Rappahannock. Large forces will be in to-morrow." And on the 21st: "General Cox's forces are coming on from Parkersburg, and will be here to-morrow and the next day. Dispute every inch of ground, and fight like the devil till we can reinforce you. Forty-eight hours more, and we can make you strong enough. Don't yield an inch if you can help it."

General Pope's dispatches are continuous during these trying days, showing his endeavors to hold the line of the Rappahannock, and his knowledge that the enemy was flanking his right.

A movement across the river, to attack the enemy's flank and rear, was stopped by a storm and consequent rise of the stream.

The enemy moving on by Sulphur Springs toward Waterloo, it became necessary for General Pope, in order to protect himself against the flanking movement, to move also in that direction.

News came from General Halleck that the reinforcements so needed by this small army, already depleted by fighting and straggling (which latter was the cause of great anxiety and of complaint to headquarters even so early as that), would begin to arrive at Warrenton on the 24th; that 30,000 were *en route*, and more expected.

Moreover, finding that holding on to the line of the Rappahannock longer, meant the abandonment of the road from Warrenton to Washington, and leaving open the route through Thoroughfare Gap, toward which Jackson was pushing, as well as all other roads north of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, Pope determined to form along the pike between Warrenton and Gainesville.

It was now the night of the 25th, and no reinforcements had reached him except General Reynolds, with 2,500 Pennsylvania Reserves, and General Kearney, with 4,500 of Heintzelman's corps.

Expecting the reinforcements stated would have been already at Gainesville, Warrenton, and Mannassas Junction, Jackson's threatened movement through Thoroughfare Gap was not a cause for uneasiness, but the reinforcements had not arrived and Jackson was coming upon our rear.

Keeping in mind the necessity of covering Washington, immediately it was determined to abandon the line of the Rappahannock, turn our whole force in the direction of Gainesville and Mannassas Junction, and interposing between Jackson and Lee, crush the former, and then turn upon Lee's front beyond Bull Run.

For nine days the troops had been incessantly marching and fighting, were worn with loss of sleep and irregular and insufficient food, and reduced by losses, by sickness and by straggling, so that they numbered only about 36,500, besides the corps of Heintzelman and Porter, numbering about 18,000, which had reached Warrenton Junction, ill provided with material or ammunition.

In this condition began the march to capture Jackson, which continued through the 27th and 28th. On the evening of the latter, McDowell, marching towards Centreville, came upon Jackson's advance retreating to Thoroughfare Gap, and a severe action took place. On the 29th, attack was made at daylight by Sigel, assisted by Hooker and Kearney, and Jackson, closely pursued, fell back to a strong position, covered by an unfinished railroad embankment. Severe skirmishing went on all day. McDowell and

Porter had been ordered to come up and fall upon the enemy's flank.

At 3 a. m. Porter had been ordered to move at dawn and report immediately, as "a severe engagement is likely to take place, and your presence is necessary."

At 4½ p. m. Porter not having moved, a peremptory order was sent him to "push forward into action at once on the enemy's (right) flank." About 5½ p. m. Heintzelman and Reno, assaulting the enemy's left, doubled it upon the center, and continued to push Jackson back until about 8 o'clock in the evening, but Porter failed to appear. The forces of Jackson were being rapidly reinforced, and the battle which General Reno described as one of the best planned of the war failed of its desired result of capturing the enemy's force on account of want of assistance.

Retreat was rendered necessary. One more fierce attack upon the rapidly recruited enemy, one more bloody check to their advance, one more well-fought battle by the worn-out troops, and on the night of the 30th the army retreated in good order and unpursued to Centreville.

In the mean time the trains had retreated, under the charge of General Banks, to Centreville, without loss.

On the 31st, the men were rested and refreshed.

On September 1st, one more severe attack was made by the enemy and repulsed, and on the 2d the army was withdrawn without interruption by the enemy, to Washington, and thus ended the campaign, after which General Pope was relieved at his own request.

In order to clearly understand this episode of the war,

which has been so little understood and so shamefully misrepresented, it is necessary to comprehend:

- 1st. What were the objects of the campaign.
- 2d. What was the force provided for accomplishing these objects.
- 3d. How it was that Jackson, who had separated himself from Lee, was not crushed before succor could arrive.
- 4th. Why the aid promised was not cordially and promptly afforded.

It has been repeatedly stated and widely credited that the object of the campaign was the capture of Richmond, and that to enable Pope to accomplish this, reinforcements were offered as freely to him as McClellan claimed they had been persistently denied to the army of the Peninsula—but that outflanked, surprised, confused, unable to manage his unwieldy forces, he had been compelled by an inferior force to retreat until his retreat became a rout, and with loss of baggage and of discipline, the army of Virginia, reinforced by the whole Potomac army of 90,000, rushed, a disorderly mass, behind the entrenchments of Washington, whence in a few days they were led to victory by General McClellan.

Indeed, the latter says in his official report “that I lost no time that could be avoided in moving the army of the Potomac from the Peninsula to the support of the army of Virginia; that I spared no effort to hasten the embarkation of the troops at Fort Monroe, Newport News, and Yorktown, remaining at Fort Monroe myself until the mass of my army had sailed; and that after my arrival at Alexandria, *I left nothing in my power undone to forward supplies and reinforcements to General Pope.* I sent with the troops

that moved, all the cavalry that I could get hold of. Even my personal escort was sent out on the line of the railway as a guard with the provost and camp guard at headquarters, retaining less than one hundred men, many of whom were orderlies, invalids, members of bands, etc.; all the headquarters' teams that arrived were sent out with supplies and ammunition, none being retained even to move the headquarters' camp."

This subject I propose to examine, and first to show the objects of the campaign.

I have already stated these to be the protection of Washington and the Shenandoah valley, and the attraction of the attention of the Rebel army from the army of the Potomac. Fortunately we have clear and undeniable testimony to the truth of this in the sworn evidence of General Pope before the committee on the Conduct of the War, given on the 8th July, 1862, twelve days after he was assigned to the command, and twenty-one days before he took personal command in the field.

In this he states his intention to constantly attack and harass the enemy upon any advance, and his conviction that he could prevent them from coming to Washington, and that he *did not feel justified in attempting to march upon Richmond* under the circumstances, because he was "made responsible for the security of the city, and the enemy would be able to come out and overwhelm the small force I have before General McClellan's army would be able to hear or know anything about it."

So much for the objects of the campaign. Next, as to the forces under his command. The consolidated morning

report of July 31st, 1862, shows a total force of 47,878; from this, however, must be deducted 6,500, as it appears from the report of General Banks, made after the battle of Cedar Mountain, that his corps, instead of about 14,500, as reported, numbered but about 8,000. This would leave about 41,000 troops. Of these, King's division of McDowell's corps was left at Fredericksburg, and did not come up until the 12th of August. The campaign begun, therefore, with (in round numbers) 30,000 men, including cavalry and artillery.

If General McClellan at the head of the 90,000 left after the retreat to Harrison's Landing, could not advance upon Richmond without 30,000 to 35,000 fresh troops (Halleck's letter to McClellan, August 6th), it could not be expected that General Pope, at the head of only that 30,000 could successfully resist the Rebel forces, much less take Richmond, unless he were reinforced by the whole of McClellan's 90,000. This, as we have seen, the latter says was done, and as rapidly as possible. Let us see.

August 3. The order to McClellan to move to Aequia Creek was issued.

August 4. It was repeated.

August 9. (The day on which the battle of Cedar Mountain was fought.) Halleck telegraphs McClellan: "I am of the opinion that the enemy is massing his forces in front of Generals Pope and Burnside, and that he expects to crush them and move forward to the Potomac. You must send reinforcements *instantly* to Aequia Creek. Considering the amount of transportation at your disposal, your delay is not satisfactory. You must move with all possible dispatch."

August 10. Again: "The enemy is crossing the Rappahannock in large force. They are fighting General Pope to-day. There must be no further delay in your movements."

On the 30th July orders had been sent to McClellan to remove his sick as quickly as possible. General McClellan's dispatches complain of Halleck's injustice and impossibility of moving faster. On the 7th August he reports 3,740 sick moved (in eight days), "*including* some that are embarked to-night, and will leave to-morrow morning," leaving about 5,700 still on hand.

August 7. Five batteries of artillery were embarked.

August 10. One regiment of cavalry.

August 11. One brigade of infantry.

August 12. McClellan telegraphs Halleck: "It is not possible for any one to place this army where you wish it, ready to move, in less than a month. If Washington is in danger now, this army can scarcely arrive in time to save it; it is in much better position to do so from here ~~than~~ from Acquia. *Our material can only be saved by using the whole army to cover it if we are pressed.* If sensibly weakened by detachments, the result might be the loss of much material and many men."

Take the capital of the country if you must, and destroy the army that defends it, but spare my baggage, which I need my whole army to protect!

At last, "on the 14th and 15th, two army corps were put in motion toward Fort Monroe," and a dispatch was sent, "Movement has commenced by land and water.
* * * I don't like Jackson's movements."

August 21. Halleck telegraphs again: "The forces of Burnside and Pope are hard pushed and require aid as

rapidly as you can send it. Come yourself, as soon as you can. By all means see that the troops sent have plenty of ammunition. We have no time here to supply them. Moreover, they may have to fight as soon as they land."

Same day McClellan answers: "Franklin is here. * * * I had already ordered all the ammunition forward."

Same day: "I have ample supplies of ammunition for infantry and artillery, and will have it up in time. *I can supply any deficiencies that may exist in General Pope's army.*"

August 23. Franklin's corps sailed.

August 27. Halleck telegraphs: "Porter is marching on Warrenton Junction, to reinforce Pope. Nothing said of Heintzelman. Porter reports a general battle imminent. Franklin's corps *should move out by forced marches.*"

Whéreupon McClellan ordered Franklin to march at once to the imminent battle reported by Porter? No, but to *prepare* to march, and *report in person* to him at Alexandria, concerning his transportation; and two hours later telegraphs: "My aid has just returned from Franklin's camp. Reports that Generals Franklin, Smith and Slocum are all in Washington. He gave the order to the next in rank to place the corps in readiness to move at once."

One hour later: "Can Franklin, without his artillery or cavalry, effect any useful purpose in front? *I do not see that we have force enough in hand to form a connection with Pope, whose exact position we do not know. ARE WE SAFE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE VALLEY?*"

Again, at 6 p. m.: "I have just received the copy of a dispatch from General Pope to you, dated at 10 a. m. to-day, in which he says: 'All forces now sent forward should be sent to my right at Gainesville.' I have now at

my disposal here about 10,000 men of Franklin's corps, about 2,800 of General Tyler's brigade, and Colonel Tyler's First Connecticut Artillery. * * * * If you *wish me to order any portion of this force to the front* (eight hours after the order that Franklin should move out by forced marches), it is in readiness to march *at a moment's notice.*"

August 28. Halleck ordered Franklin, by direct dispatch to him, to move toward Manassas.

To this McClellan, not Franklin, answers: "I think the enemy is in so much force near Manassas as to make it necessary for us to move in force."

Again, on same day, Halleck telegraphs: "Not a moment must be lost in pushing as large a force as possible toward Manassas, so as to communicate with Pope before the enemy is reinforced."

Same day, 4:10 p. m. (thirty hours after the order for forced marching, and twenty-two hours after stating that 13,000 men were in readiness to march at a moment's notice), McClellan telegraphs: "General Franklin is with me here. We are not yet in a condition to move; may be by to-morrow morning"

Same day, 4:45 p. m., he telegraphs: "Neither Franklin's nor Sumner's corps is now in condition to move and fight a battle."

To which Halleck replies: "They must go to-morrow morning, ready or not ready."

August 29. 10:30 a. m. McClellan telegraphs: "Franklin's corps is in motion. Started about 6 a. m. * * I should not have moved him but for your pressing order of last night."

August 29, 12 M. McClellan telegraphs: "Franklin has only between 10,000 and 11,000 for duty. How far do you wish this force to advance?"

Unable to correctly resolve this in his own mind, and concluding, to use the language of his official report, that "it would have been very injudicious to have pushed Franklin's small force beyond Annandale," and probably still uncertain whether it was safe in the direction of the Valley, he halted them at that place, and asked at 1 P. M.: "Shall I do as seems best to me with all the troops in this vicinity, including Franklin?"

At 3 P. M. Halleck replied: "I want Franklin's corps to go far enough to find out something about the enemy."

At 8 P. M. McClellan says: "*It was not* SAFE for Franklin to move beyond Annandale under the circumstances. * * * Please give distinct orders in reference to Franklin's movements to-morrow."

At 10 P. M.: "I have sent orders to Franklin to place himself in communication with General Pope as soon as possible."

Thus, Franklin on the night of the third day, after orders to move by forced marches, had advanced as far as Annandale, six miles from Alexandria.

Why he did not move on the 27th, 28th and 29th was, McClellan says, because he was without transportation for supplies and ammunition. Gen. Halleck's dispatch of August 30th says: "The quartermaster's department would have given him plenty of transportation if he had applied for it any time since his arrival at Alexandria."

August 30. McClellan again asks concerning the *route* for the troops to take, and Halleck answers: "Send the troops where the fighting is;" and two hours later—"they

must use their legs and make forced marches. Time now is everything."

Realizing this fact, by superhuman exertions, the corps of Franklin and Sumner were forwarded at last and reached Centreville, but a few miles from Alexandria, on the night of the 30th August, after the campaign was over, the enemy reinforced with all his army, and the opportunity for giving a blow to the enemy, from which he not only could not have easily recovered, but would have enabled us to follow up the advantage, in all probability, with the speedy capture of Richmond.

By this time the sole reinforcements received from the Army of the Potomac were: Reynolds' Pennsylvania Reserves, 2,500; Heintzelman's and Porter's corps, numbering together, say 18,000. In all 20,500.

Of these, Porter's corps refused to fight until the 30th, so that from the 4th August until that day, Pope's army fought the whole campaign unsupported, except by Reynolds and Heintzelman, and on that day by Porter. The only fighting after that was on the 1st of September, which was carried on entirely by the forces he had before Porter assisted him.

Ninety thousand men made up the Army of the Potomac. WHERE WERE THE REMAINING SEVENTY THOUSAND?

I have said that Porter refused to fight his corps until the 30th. At 3 A. M., on the 29th, as I have before stated, he was ordered to move at dawn, but did not do so.

On the morning of the 29th he received the order to move to Gainesville direct. He had then been reinforced

by Piatt's brigade of Sturgis' division, and had about 12,000 men, containing nearly all the regular army, and eight batteries of artillery. Its march that day and the day previous had been but a few miles. He and McDowell marched together toward the scene of action. The latter pushed on and took part. The former halted and stacked arms, and sometime later in the day wrote to McDowell and King: "The enemy are in strong force on this road, and as they appear to have driven our forces back, the firing of the enemy having advanced, and ours retired, I have determined to withdraw to Manassas. The advancing masses of dust show the enemy coming in force."

At this time, against orders, knowing, as he says, that our army of worn out men, not three times the number of his own corps, was being worsted in the battle, which was raging in his front, he deemed it **SAFE** to retire to Manassas.

At 4:30 p. m. the order for him to "push forward into action at once on the enemy's flank and if possible on his rear" was sent, and received by him at 5 p. m. The effect of the order upon him was to make him stay for very shame, but not to obey. It was not sufficient to make him fling himself like a soldier into the fray where his friends were falling fast, and turn the tide of battle with his splendid fresh reserve of nearly one-third of the army. It was not enough to rouse him to action—it simply caused him to sit down by the wayside and wish the enemy had not been strong enough to drive our men back. If they had been retreating it would have been safe to

advance. Halt, then, and reflect—"the advancing masses of dust show the enemy coming in force."

But the orders—they are disobeyed already—and how do I know that they are judicious if obeyed? The duty of a soldier—it has been forgotten so long that a few hours will make no difference. The duty of a citizen of the Republic—that is forgotten.

Honor.—"What is honor? A word. What is that word—honor? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. Is it insensible, then? Yea, to the dead, But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honor's a mere escutcheon, and so ends my catechism."

Catechism said, what hinders sound sleep until the morrow? Not the crime committed, nor the battle lost in consequence thereof.

Before closing this portion of the subject I beg to call attention to the following extracts from an article by General Strother, (*Porte Crayon*) in *Harper's Magazine* for November, 1867:

August 27. Messengers had been dispatched to hasten the march of Fitz John Porter, who was behind with his fresh and veteran corps. These troops are expected to reach us by daylight, to replace Hooker, in case the enemy attack in that direction. McDowell, with his own and Sigel's command, over 30,000 men, are to move from Warrenton in the morning and fall upon Jackson, before Lee with the main body of the Rebel army can support him. These orders carried out, and we will make Jackson pay dearly for his dinner and night's frolic at Manassas.

August 28. General Porter, who was expected to be up during the night, did not arrive until 10 A. M. There is much indignant comment among the staff officers on this dangerous delay. * * I was sent back with a message to Generals Porter, Hooker and Heintzelman, ordering them to move their commands on Manassas without delay. I found Porter at Bristoe and delivered the message.

August 29. At three o'clock this morning I was aroused by Colonel Ruggles in person to carry written orders to General Fitz John Porter, supposed to be lying at Manassas Junction, or alternately at Bristoe. The combat we had witnessed last evening was between King's division of McDowell's corps, and a portion of Jackson's command. The fight was sharp and sanguinary, but without decisive results. Kearney, having driven out the enemy's rear guard, occupied Centreville. It was understood that McDowell's command occupied a position which cut Jackson off from the main body of the rebel army. There will doubtless be a sanguinary battle to-day. Porter's orders are to move on Centreville without delay. * * It was broad daylight when I reached Porter's quarters at Bristoe. While he coolly read it over—(the dispatch)—I noted the time by his watch, which marked five o'clock and twenty minutes precisely.

And after the close of the day he adds:

Porter, who received the order, carried by myself this morning, at sunrise to move on Centreville, and a second order at Manassas, turning his course toward Groveton, has shown no disposition to assist in the fight at all, but has lain quietly in the sight and hearing of the battle all the afternoon.

A jury of his peers tried and condemned him to be cashiered and forever forbidden to hold any office of trust or profit under the United States Government.

It is generally asserted, and the impression is sedulously cultivated by Porter and his friends, that he was cashiered for disobedience of orders simply, and that it was a hard sentence for doing only as so many others did without any punishment therefor.

But this is entirely incorrect. He was indeed found guilty of disobedience of orders, but the chief charge against him was as follows:

CHARGE 2. Violation of the Fifty-Second Article of War.

Specification 1. In this: That the said Major General Fitz John Porter, during the battle of Manassas, on Friday, the 29th of August, 1862, while within sight of the field and in full hearing of its artillery, did receive from Major General Pope, his superior and commanding

officer, a lawful order to attack the enemy in the following figure and letters, to-wit:

HEADQUARTERS IN THE FIELD, Aug. 29, 1862—4:30 P. M.

Major General Porter:

"Your line of march brings you in on the enemy's right flank. I desire you to push forward into action at once on the enemy's flank, and if possible on his rear, keeping your right in communication with General Reynolds. The enemy is massed in the woods in front of us, but can be shelled out as soon as you engage his flank. Keep heavy reserves and use your batteries, keeping well closed to your right all the time. In case you are obliged to fall back, do so to your right and rear so as to keep you in close communication with the right wing.

(Signed)

JOHN POPE,

Major General Commanding.

Which said order the said Major General Porter did then and there shamefully disobey, and did retreat from advancing forces of the enemy without any attempt to engage them, or to aid the troops that were already fighting greatly superior numbers and were relying on the flank attack he was thus ordered to make to secure a decisive victory, and to capture the enemy's army, a result which must have followed from said flank attack, had it been made by the said General Porter, in compliance with the said order which he so shamefully disobeyed. This at or near Manassas, in the State of Virginia, on or about the 29th of August, 1862.

Specification 2. In this: That the said Major General Fitz John Porter, being with his army corps, on the 29th of August, 1862, between Manassas Station and the field of battle then pending between the forces of the United States and those of the rebels, and within sound of the guns, and in presence of the enemy, and knowing that a severe action was being fought, and that the aid of his corps was greatly needed, did fail all day to bring it on the field, and did shamefully fall back and retreat from the advance of the enemy without any attempt to give them battle, and without knowing the forces from which he shamefully retreated. This near Manassas Station, in the State of Virginia, on the 29th of August, 1862.

Specification 3. In this: That the said Major General Fitz John Porter, being with his army corps near the field of battle at Manassas, on the 29th of August 1862, while a severe action was being fought by the troops of Major General Pope's command, and being in the belief that the troops of the said General Pope were sustaining

defeat and retiring from the field, did shamefully fail to go to the aid of the said troops and General, and did shamefully retreat away and fall back with his army to the Manassas Junction and leave to the disasters of a presumed defeat the said army, and did fail by any attempt to attack the enemy to aid in averting the misfortunes of a disaster that would have endangered the safety of the capital of the country. This at or near Manassas Station, in the State of Virginia, on the 29th of August, 1862.

The second and third specifications leave out of view all orders received, and try him, and convict him, and condemn him for unsoldierly, cowardly, or treasonable conduct in the presence of the enemy, which, as I have shown you, he himself admits.

From that sentence he is now seeking to be relieved and restored to his rank in the army.

The court which tried him was composed of such men as Generals Hunter, Hitchcock, King, Ricketts, and Garfield, and the trial was conducted by Judge-Advocate General Holt, and we learn from the official report of the trial that "Major General Fitz John Porter, having heard the order appointing the court read, was asked if he had any objection to any member named in the detail, and replied that he had no objection."

And, before the trial, General Porter's counsel, Reverdy Johnson, said to a high officer of the government: "We have seen the detail of the court, and General Porter is perfectly satisfied with it. He regards them all as men of the highest honor and integrity." After the trial, and before the verdict of the court was known, Mr Johnson said to General Halleck: Whatever may be the result, neither General Porter nor his friends can have any ground of complaint against the court. I consider the trial to have been perfectly fair.

He has since published a pamphlet at Morristown, N. J., entitled "Appeal to the President of the United States," in which he bitterly attacks the report of the trial by General Holt, charges that President Lincoln was by that misled to confirmation of the unanimous sentence of the court, and endeavors to excuse his conduct by attempting to show that if he *had* engaged the enemy he would have been defeated—or in other words, that it was not ~~SAFE~~ to do so. It is scarcely worth while to say more of this production than that it opens with an opinion of George B. McClellan, and ends with a letter from W. B. Franklin, and that both are quite as sure that Porter was clearly right, and Pope as clearly wrong, as they were before the campaign commenced. United in desire, in action they are not divided.

It is charged against General Sherman that he recommends the granting of Porter's request. The truth of the matter is, that, as traitors and rebels are now relieved from political disabilities, so he is willing that Porter should be relieved to that extent and no further. Indeed, no officer who regards the honor or efficiency of the army can, as it seems to me, recommend any thing more than that, or call the sentence other than light. His alternative is cowardice or treason on the field of battle. Fit punishment for either is death.

But *were* the "enemy coming in force?" Pope and McDowell both testified that his obedience of orders would have gained the day, because the flank of the enemy was ill protected. But Porter saw "advancing masses of dust." Listen to General J. E. B. Stuart's report. He says that on the 29th of August, he was on that flank with his cavalry

and found our troops approaching. "I waited his (our) approach long enough to ascertain that there was at least an army corps, *at the same time keeping detachments of cavalry dragging brush down the road from the direction of Gainesville*, so as to deceive the enemy, a ruse which Porter's report shows was successful, and notified the Commanding General then opposite me on the turnpike, that Longstreet's flank and rear were seriously threatened, and of the importance to us of the ridge I held. Immediately upon receipt of that intelligence, Jenkins', Kemper's, and D. R. Jones' brigades, and several pieces of artillery, were ordered to me by General Longstreet, and being placed in position fronting Bristoe awaited the enemy's advance. After exchanging a few shots with rifle pieces, this corps withdrew toward Manassas."

Longstreet reports that his right being threatened he sent reinforcements, but "after some few shots the enemy withdrew his forces," and the brigades sent were returned to resist the attack of our men which was doubling his left on his centre. Stonewall Jackson in his official report corroborating both Stuart and Longstreet, sums up the whole matter thus: "After some desultory skirmishing and heavy cannonading during the day, the Federal infantry, about 4 o'clock in the evening, moved from under cover of the wood and advanced in several lines, first engaging the right, but soon extending its attack to the center and left. In a few moments our entire line was engaged in a fierce and sanguinary struggle with the enemy. As one line was repulsed another took its place and pressed forward as if determined by force of numbers and fury of assault, to drive us from our position. So impetuous and well sus-

tained were these onsets as to induce me to send to the Commanding General for reinforcements, *but the timely and gallant advance of General Longstreet on the right relieved my troops from pressure of overwhelming numbers.*"

The aid then afforded by Longstreet, which Porter's desertion enabled him to send, prevented Pope from gaining the victory.

This General was he to whom McClellan telegraphed, on September 1st, after the army was at Centreville, and all operations were over: "Major General Porter, I ask you, for my sake, and that of the country, and the old Army of the Potomac, that you and all my friends will lend the fullest and most cordial co-operation to General Pope in all the operations now going on."

To which the reply was perfect: "You may rest assured that all your friends, *as well as* every lover of his country, will ever give, AS THEY HAVE GIVEN to General Pope, their cordial co-operation and constant support, in the execution of all orders and plans."

Now let me call your attention to only a few more dispatches, and I have done.

On the fatal 29th of August, General Pope telegraphed for supplies for his exhausted troops. To this General Franklin replies: "I have been instructed by General McClellan to inform you that he will have all the available wagons at Alexandria *loaded* with rations for your troops, and all of the cars also, *as soon as you will send in a cavalry escort* to Alexandria as a guard to the train."

Wrestling with death on the field of battle, Pope must send away his worn-out cavalry to guard a train which would be loaded for him as soon as the cavalry should arrive!

Again: August 30, to a request for ammunition, comes the reply from General McClellan (who had telegraphed on the 21st that he had enough to supply any deficiencies in Pope's army), "I know nothing of the calibres of Pope's artillery."

Again: August 29, 2:45 p. m. McClellan telegraphs President Lincoln: "I am clear that one of two courses should be adopted: *First*, to concentrate all our available forces to open communication with Pope (which, as we have seen, he resolutely and persistently failed to do); *Second*, to leave Pope to get out of his scrape, and at once to use all our means to make the capital safe."

Recall the circumstances of the case. Pope's army, fighting day and night, day after day, against overwhelming forces, refused the promised reinforcements; the nation aching for comfort; the soldier of the forlorn hope of the Republic bravely accomplishing his thankless duty, and the commander of seventy thousand untouched men, who had not smelted powder for weeks, sits quietly in his tent, with the sound of battle filling the air, wondering whether it is safe toward the valley, and suggesting to the President to "leave Pope to get out of his scrape!"

Now, hot from the reading of all these official records turn back and read again McClellan's report: "After my arrival in Alexandria, I left nothing in my power undone to forward supplies and reinforcements to General Pope."

And then a little further on he says: "It will be remembered that at the time I was assigned to the command of the forces for the defense of the National Capital, on the 2d day of September, 1862, *the greater part of all the available troops* were suffering under the disheartening influence of the serious defeat they had encountered during the brief and unfortunate campaign of General Pope. Their numbers

were greatly reduced by casualties—their confidence was much shaken, and they had lost something of that *esprit du corps* which is indispensable to the efficiency of an army. Moreover they had left behind, lost, or worn out the greater part of their clothing and camp equipage, which required renewal before they could be in proper condition to take the field again."

As a comment on the latter portion of this, General Banks reported September 2d that all the trains had been brought in by him without loss.

Again: "The army of the Potomac was recalled from within sight of Richmond"—after a retreat of thirty miles, and confessed inability to proceed—"and incorporated with the army of Virginia." * * * "They fought well, faithfully, gallantly under General Pope, yet were compelled to fall back on Washington, defeated and almost demoralized," whence he led them to victory.

Have we need of comment here? No words of mine can strongly enough characterize the conduct which preceded the report, or the report which covered up the conduct.

If we look for the cause of the conduct of McClellan, Porter, and Franklin excusing them from charges of cowardice or treason, we can discover but two:

First. Jealousy at the appointment of a successful soldier to command.

Second. An order issued by General Pope on taking command of the army in which were the following expressions: "I have come to you from the West where we have always seen the backs of our enemies, from an army whose business it has been to seek the adversary and beat him when found, whose policy has been attack, and not defense. I desire you to dismiss from your minds certain

phrases which I am sorry to find so much in vogue among you. I hear constantly of taking strong positions, and holding them, and lines of retreat, and bases of supplies. Let us discard such ideas. The strongest position a soldier should desire to occupy is one from which he can most easily advance against the enemy. Let us study the probable lines of retreat of our opponents, and leave our own to take care of themselves. Let us look before and not behind. Success and glory are in the advance. Disaster and shame lurk in the rear."

General Pope disclaims any intention to reflect upon General McClellan in this, and if there be any sting in it, it is to be found only in the truth of its statements, and the excellence of its advice heard with rejoicing by the nation, which was weary with waiting and sick at the heart with hope deferred. Viewed in the light of the attendant facts, and the objects of the campaign, it was certainly well said, but even if it had been intended as a bitter jibe—even if it had been, was the proper payment to be made in lost battles, falling fellow-soldiers, the weeping of strong men, and the wan faces of widows—in danger to the Republic and encouragement to its foes?

I can not sum up the campaign better than has been done by General Strother, (*Porte Crayon*) who speaks from personal knowledge and with authority, and, therefore, I quote his words :

"From this point (Cedar Mountain) until we reached the banks of the Potomac in front of Washington the campaign presents a series of dashing and audacious manœuvres and sanguinary combats, in which the National army lost neither honor nor advantage, until it closed with its powerful adversary in the culminating fight at Groveton. Up to this point our affairs wore an encouraging aspect, and it seemed as if General Pope's intelligent and energetic measures were about to be crowned with success. Jackson had made a rash adventure, and was caught in it. We had brought him to a stand

with not over twenty-five thousand men, while we had sixty thousand in position to fall upon and crush him before his supports could possibly arrive. Thus, on the morning of Friday, the 29th, Lee, with the main body of the Southern army, was separated from Jackson by a full day's march, while the National troops all lay within two or three hours, at most, of the decisive field, with direct and open roads to move upon, and it must be conceded that in the contest of manœuvres the Union commander had fairly out-generalled his adversary. Without hesitation or delay all the troops immediately under General Pope's eye were thrown upon the enemy. All day long the roar of musketry and cannon, like the sounding of a mighty gong, invited the absent to share in the feast of death and glory; all day long the white battle-cloud, visible from hill and plain for twenty miles around, beckoned to laggard and skulker, to the exhausted soldier who had dropped behind his regiment, to the starred chieftain who may have mistaken his way or misunderstood his orders; all day long the anxious commander counted the minutes, and urged his faithful legions to a succession of brilliant but exhausting attacks, vainly listening for the burst upon the enemy's right and rear which was to give us victory.

Thus passed the day, and the hour, and the decisive opportunity. Sunset on the 29th still found us with the light columns of Sigel, Heintzelman, and Reno dashing against the strong and stubbornly-defended position of the enemy. Some of these indeed we had carried, doubling back Jackson's left, and holding a great portion of the contested field, with the enemy's dead and wounded in our hands; but the combatants were too equally matched in numbers, pluck, and condition to admit of our pushing this advantage to a decisive conclusion. Then, long expected but too late, McDowell appeared, and reported his column coming into position on our left. Then came darkness, followed by a sharp but indecisive bickering of musketry between King's division of McDowell's and Hood's command of Longstreet's corps, the leading division of the enemy's reinforcing column at the same hour coming into position on Jackson's right.

Porter, with his splendid corps, had never appeared on the field at all. Thus it was that the hopes of victory and the prestige of successful generalship passed from the Union commander to his adversaries. To complete the views of this day's operations I make a note of the enemy's movements, obtained from the most authentic sources. My principal informant, the chief engineer of Lee's staff,

says: 'On the morning of the 29th General Lee took breakfast at a house west of Thoroughfare Gap. Riding forward rapidly they passed Longstreet moving through the Gap, the head of the column some short distance on the eastern side. They marched left in front, Hood's division leading. This division reached the field and formed on Jackson's right after sunset on the 29th, and immediately thereafter became engaged with a portion of McDowell's command, as before stated. Other portions of Longstreet's command arrived and took position during the night. On the morning of the 30th (Saturday), Longstreet's command was all up except Anderson's division, which had not yet reached the field. The absence of this division and a feeling of uncertainty as to Porter's forces and intentions, induced General Lee to remain on the defensive during the afternoon of Saturday. About one o'clock p. m. Anderson arrived and the Rebel commander immediately commenced his preparations for an aggressive movement. He was anticipated by Porter's attack, which, being but feebly urged, soon failed, and afforded the golden opportunity for the grand counter-attack, whose progress and results have been detailed.'

This statement fully confirms my own observations and sustains General Pope's theory of the situation on Friday, the 29th.

What followed after the retreat to Washington, on the 2d of September, I quote from the *Life of Lincoln*, by Mr. Arnold, formerly a Member of Congress from Illinois:

"Two courses were suggested and discussed in the Cabinet of Mr. Lincoln. One was to place McClellan in command of all the forces, including both the Army of Virginia and of the Potomac, and the other to arrest and try him and some of his subordinates for disobedience and insubordination. General Halleck and the Secretary of War charged him with disobedience of orders, and with being responsible for the disasters under Pope, and they were clearly right.

"It was stated by at least one member of the Cabinet that McClellan deserved death for his repeated disobedience of orders and failure to reinforce Pope. He and Fitz John Porter must go down to posterity as responsible for the sacrifice of Pope and his army.

"The President said to Pope, when he came to Washington, that he had no fault to find with him; he had faithfully performed his duty; yet, yielding to the real or supposed necessities of the hour, he relieved him of his command, and placed the person most responsible for his disasters again at the head of the army.

"On the trial of Fitz John Porter for disobedience, his guilt was clearly established, and the evidence of the complicity of his superior (McClellan) was scarcely less clear. General McClellan was never placed on trial, because the Government, with a knowledge of the facts, gave him a new command, and the gallant Army of the Potomac fought and won the battle of Antietam, and this, to some extent, condoned his great offense."

Why General McClellan was re-instated has been thus told by Dr. Draper, in his able *History of the Civil War*: "Though there was never purer patriotism than that which animated the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, that army had been brought, through the influence of officers who surrounded General McClellan, into a most dangerous condition—dangerous to the best interests of the nation—of having a wish of its own, and that wish in opposition to the convictions of the Government. In armies it is but a short step from the possession of a wish to the expression of a will. Perhaps at no period of the war were thoughtful men more deeply alarmed for the future of the nation than when they heard of the restoration of McClellan to command, and recognized the unmistakable constraint under which the Government had acted. * * * Lincoln was ostensibly reconciled to the re-instating of McClellan, by the circumstances that he, of all the Generals, was most familiar with the defenses of Washington. What, with fatigue, disappointment and anxiety, Halleck's health was almost broken down."

I have shown you, entirely from official records what were the objects of the campaign, viz: To protect Washington and bring in safely the Army of the Potomac; and that these were accomplished without the rout and loss of baggage, of which reports were as industriously circulated, and as entirely untrue, as that of the intention to take Richmond.

I have shown you that the forces he set out with were but about the number that McClellan required to reinforce his army of 90,000 men, in order to advance on Richmond; that, with the exception of about 10,000 men, none reached

him from the Army of the Potomac, before the end of the campaign, except Porter's superb corps, which its commander says he marched to the rear to the sound of the victorious enemy's cannon, and (having defeated the great opportunity offered of cutting off Jackson) only consented to allow to take part in the battle of the 30th, and even then but feebly.

I have shown you that by the delay, which can hardly be otherwise construed than as willfully criminal, of McClellan, Porter, and Franklin, not only the opportunity of the 29th was lost, but that the advance of Lee, who without Jackson's aid would have been compelled to retreat, was rendered possible, and the bloody battles of South Mountain and Antietam were made necessary.

In a word I have shown you that a campaign undertaken for a purpose likely to be misunderstood, was entirely successful in its accomplishment, and missed of brilliant success simply by the withholding of assistance which can only be accounted for upon the theory of, first, cowardice and incompetency; secondly, either personal ambition or petty jealousy, which, for the attainment of its ends, was willing to risk the safety of the Republic and sacrifice its army; or, lastly, premeditated treason.

It has been a pleasure to me to thus prove to the Club, by indisputable facts, that the record of our fellow member, who gave us our first drill when at its first meeting after the fall of Fort Sumpter the Club resolved itself into a military company, a record so widely known by his brilliant capture of New Madrid and Island No. 10, has in no respect suffered by the much-abused, much-misrepresented, but successful and brilliant Virginia campaign.

In order to confine my essay within reasonable limits, I have necessarily abridged far beyond my wish the statement of facts, but after careful examination I have endeavored to lay before you those which are the most prominent and important, withholding nothing knowingly that would diminish their force.

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